

YANKS FACE DEADLY TRAPS IN ARGONNE

Reconquering of Forest Accomplished in Spite of Terrific Resistance by Foe.

Other Units Luckily Escaped From Experiences Similar to "Lost" Battalion's.

By HERBERT BAILEY.
Special Cable Despatch to The Sun from the London Times Service.

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WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY IN FRANCE, Oct. 13.—The reconquest of the Argonne forest reflects great credit upon the American army and particularly upon the American unit which fought its way through the wilderness. From where the men now stand they can look back on the vast stretch of forest and feel well satisfied that they have accomplished a feat that nothing but steady persistence, cheerful endurance and readiness to fight at any moment could have brought to completion. The Germans used liberally all the fighting ingenuity they possess, which is of no mean quality, to prevent the reconquest of this district. On both flanks, the right in the Aire Valley and the left at Binarville, they fought with determination and even with desperation, which indicated the importance they placed upon the operation.

But the Americans on the right and the French on the left, by steady and persistent fighting, by a process of restlessness and movement which the Germans were forced to fight without a moment's intermission, by a firm resolve not to let all the massed machine guns or atrocious weather stay their progress, forced the Germans back, leaving a long stream of German dead to mark the path of their advance.

While the most important operations were those on either side of the forest, the Germans endeavored to prevent the pinching off process by holding up the two flanks, thus blocking, as they hoped, a junction at the northern end—the most adventurous and spectacular fighting was in the forest itself. There the Americans did not expect the Germans would offer such heavy resistance as was encountered.

Forest Fighting Heavy Task.
The flanks were prepared to advance slowly, just penetrating the wilderness as the Germans withdrew, but the German resistance on the flanks imposed upon the unit fighting through the forest a singularly heavy task. They found as they moved forward that the Germans had stationed snipers and machine gunners at every conceivable spot. Wherever there was a clearing, road, they had to face a barrage of machine gun fire, both direct and indirect.

It was curious how distinctly these deadly spots are marked by splintered trees, churned ground and the refuse that all fighting men leave behind after a local action. There was a crossroads corner where gigantic German signs direct one to every conceivable place. Through this corner there runs one of the amazingly numerous light railroads which the Germans have built all through the forest. This crossroad is in the Bois d'Apremont and some of the heaviest fighting occurred there.

Then there were trench systems about Binarville which, as in the case of the "Lost American Battalion," gave the Germans an opportunity, should there be any defect in the line, to break through the men in the forest. This occurred not merely once but again and again.

It is easy to realize what a task faced the Americans. Not only is the undergrowth almost impassable, with the trees thickly entwined, but the Argonne consists of one long series of hills with numerous ravines, some so steep that it is impossible to obtain a foothold on the downward slope. One looks down from the heights upon these ravines into the most forbidding of valleys where the marsh lands are traps of death.

The Germans organized most of these valleys into little "Singapore Villages." The concrete houses they built and the light railways they constructed are certainly picturesque.

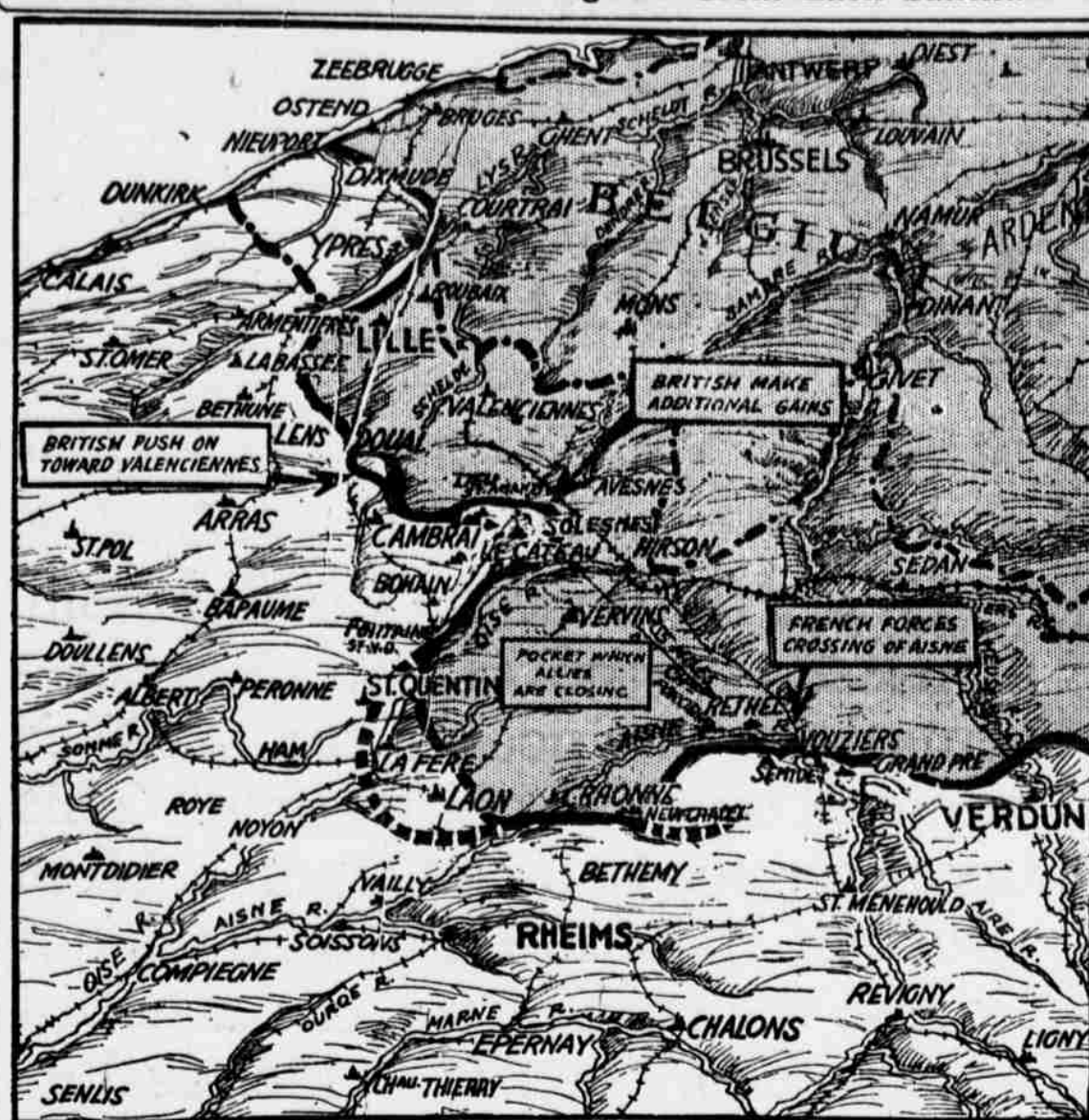
It was through such places, infested by the enemy, that the Americans advanced. The barbed wire was so thick that from above it looked like a solid wall. But the ingenuity of the Germans and the treacheries of the wilderness could not stop the Americans.

GOURAUD ON AISNE
AT BEND AT RETHEL
Is Across the River in Neighborhood of Vouziers.

By the Associated Press.
WITH THE FRENCH ARMY IN FRANCE, Oct. 13.—Gen. Gouraud's troops in pursuit of the Germans have reached the banks of the Aisne in the bend that passes south of Rethel and Chateau Porcien. Five thousand civilians have been liberated and many villages and towns retaken from the Germans.

Marshal Foch sealed his triumph over Gen. Ludendorff and Field Marshal von Hindenburg yesterday, when Gen. Gouraud's men entered Vouziers.

Where the French Are Closing the Great Laon Salient.



POWERFUL German forces that for four years have held the so-called elbow in the battle line, are now in full retreat in a desperate effort to save men and material from capture by the French. The capture of La Fere and Laon marks the beginning of the clearing out of the pocket, the mouth of which is only fifty-five miles across, an

ENEMY FLEES TO ESCAPE A POCKET

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the Sambre and the Argonne forest there are five German armies, numbering at least 500,000 fighting men, besides immense stores of material and large numbers of heavy guns, all gathered into a region where there are few main roads and railroads, the danger to the Germans in this withdrawal is apparent.

Since the Champagne offensive began two weeks ago the French have captured nearly 25,000 prisoners there, besides more than 500 guns, and have freed nearly forty villages.

As the pressure of the Allies increases all the German armies between Le Cateau and the Meuse are being forced back gradually toward the Ardennes, from which position they can escape in the form of complete armies accompanied by their heavy guns and impediments only by making flank marches across the Allies' front toward Valenciennes in one direction or toward the gap between the Ardennes and the Allies' battle line north of Verdun in the other. The latter gap has been decreased steadily by the French and American penetration north of the Argonne.

The German line of retreat lies through the neighborhood of Sedan, and that famous battlefield is likely to take on a new significance for the German people. The northern lines of railways in Belgium are not available to take out the bulk of the Germans in France as they already are congested by the German preparations to evacuate western Belgium.

OFFICIAL BULLETINS OF THE WAR OFFICES

La Fere and St. Gobain Massif Occupied by the French.

LONDON, Oct. 13.—The following reports of operations on the front in France and Belgium were issued to-day by the various war offices:

BRITISH (NIGHT)—During the day local engagements between our troops and the enemy's advanced detachments have continued along the line

of the Selle River. Our bridgehead positions in the neighborhood of Solesmes have been enlarged and progress has been made on the west bank of the river about Haussy and Saulz.

There has been local fighting in the neighborhood of Lileu-St. Amand. We captured a number of prisoners. Early this morning our advanced troops crossed the Seneffe Canal at Aubigny-au-Bac and captured nearly 200 prisoners and machine guns in positions in the face of strong counter attacks.

Northwest of Douai we have continued to advance. We hold Courcelles-lez-Lens and Noyelles-Godault and are approaching the line of the Haute Deule Canal on the whole of the front between Douai and Vendin-le-Vieil. A number of prisoners were captured in our operations on this sector.

BRITISH (DAY)—East of the Scheldt Canal we gained possession of Montcourt village and reached the outskirts of Lileu-St. Amand. In the Douai sector our troops are now within a few hundred yards of the town and have captured the Faubourg d'Esquerchin, the Douai prison in the form of complete armies accompanied by their heavy guns and impediments only by making flank marches across the Allies' front toward Valenciennes in one direction or toward the gap between the Ardennes and the Allies' battle line north of Verdun in the other. The latter gap has been decreased steadily by the French and American penetration north of the Argonne.

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GERMAN (DAY)—Army group of Crown Prince Rupprecht: In the canal sector on both sides of Douai and the western edge of Douai we are in fighting contact with the enemy. Douai has suffered considerably from enemy artillery fire and airplane bombs.

Northeast of Cambrai during the night of October 12-13 we withdrew somewhat from the enemy. The enemy followed yesterday at midday and in the evening reached the vicinity of Avesnes-le-Sec and the heights on the western bank of the Selle, near Saulz and Haussy.

In the early morning there was a violent artillery duel on both sides of Le Cateau. Between Solesmes and Le Cateau the enemy attacked with

strong forces. He was successful in penetrating into our positions on both sides of Neuville. A counter attack which was prepared for by the most intense artillery fire resulted in complete success and again threw the enemy back. A partial attack, which was renewed in the evening near Briastre, was repulsed.

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FIGHTERS HEEDLESS OF ENEMY PEACE BID

Americans Battle On Undisturbed by Germany's Offer to Quit.

WORD PASSED TO FRONT

Only Effect Is to Create a Doubt and Increase Determination to Win.

By the Associated Press.

WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY NORTHWEST OF VERDUN, Oct. 13.—The synchronized crash of the big guns and the crackles of rifles and automatics heard on the greater part of the American front to-day reflected the attitude of the army as regards Germany's announcement that she is willing to accept President Wilson's peace terms. It was obvious that the forces of Germany and the Allies, particularly the Allies, regarded their part in the great drama still is to fight.

Whether the news of their Government's announcement of willingness to concede President Wilson's terms has reached the Germans is not known, but the water part of the American Army was given as early as possible all information in possession of general headquarters. From corps headquarters the news was sent to division headquarters, and from there to the men in reserve positions and on the fighting line.

Majority Express Doubt.
The effect produced was what might have been expected. There were rare instances of outbursts of enthusiastic cheering, but for every man who so displayed his emotion there were a hundred whose only comment was an expression of doubt as to the honesty of Germany's intentions.

There was nothing in the day's operations to convince the Americans that the war was over. Before daylight the Germans displayed more than usual activity in shelling certain positions. East and west of the Meuse they brought up fresh forces and counter attacked. All of them broke down before the violent firing of the Americans.

As the day wore on the fighting developed greater intensity along the western part of the line, but it was confined almost wholly to the artillery wings, the American fire finally attaining the proportions of a barrage, although it was not followed up by infantry attack.

An increased percentage of defective ammunition appears to have been used to-day by the Germans. Montfaucon was shelled rather heavily, but a check late to-day showed that 90 per cent. of the missiles were "duds."

The German prisoners in American hands were told early to-day of their country's peace offering. Instead of adding to their gloom the general effect was to stimulate them to some liveliness. The good humor of the prisoners was lowered somewhat, at least in one case, by the suggestion that they might be detained until French villages are restored.

Along the roads in the trenches the American soldiers were disposed to regard the peace development as a matter of course—one for satisfaction, but not for premature rejoicing. The fighting at the Marne and on the Somme, St. Mihiel and other sectors has developed in the American soldier a grimness that would be difficult to explain. There were few comments on the peace situation as the business of warfare proceeded to-day.

"Up to Him to Quit."
"Well, if Heine wants to quit he can do so. But it's up to him to do the quitting," was the most general expression used by the American troops.

While more spectacular progress has been made on certain other parts of the battle front it is known that the allied commanders are satisfied with the work of the Americans. They have been placed here on what many regard as a most difficult sector. It has not been the part to make great strides forward so much as it has been to destroy German divisions which have been thrown into the battle line in a manner reflecting the determination to hold back their enemies at a point where the loss of

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150 REPORTED DEAD IN PORTO RICO QUAKE

Almost Every Town in Island Seriously Damaged.

By the Associated Press.

SAN JUAN, P. R., Oct. 12, (delayed).—One hundred and fifty lives were lost in the earthquake yesterday in Porto Rico. It was estimated by Gen. Yager to-day. Almost every town in the island reports damage of property and scattering fatalities.

The greatest loss of life was at Mayaguez and Aguadilla, west coast cities, and in the intervening territory. The known dead at Mayaguez are given as forty and at Aguadilla thirty.

At Mayaguez 70 per cent. of the houses of brick and cement construction are reported destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

At Aguadilla the loss of life was due chiefly to the tidal wave. At Ponce, on the south coast, the known dead are reported to be seven and the injured eleven.

Gov. Yager, the Red Cross and the military authorities are working together for relief, with Col. Tippet of the Army Medical Corps, in charge at Mayaguez.

Churches, hospitals, schools and public buildings everywhere suffered great damage. San Juan was the least damaged of the large towns.

Lieut. Rheno, U. S. Flier, Dies.
PARIS, Oct. 13.—Lieut. Walter S. Rheno, Marine's Vineyard, Mass., an aviator in the Lafayette Escadrille, died to-day in the American hospital in Neuilly of pneumonia. He had to his credit several German airplanes and had been decorated with the French war cross.

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